

Rep. Laura Ruderman
45th District

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2001
Environment
& Energy
Report



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Laura Ruderman
45th District

**2001 Environment &
Energy Report**

Dear neighbors,

This summer, you could be paying \$2 or \$3 a gallon for gasoline while your monthly power bills could triple.

Some, including Vice President Dick Cheney, suggest we fix the energy crisis by using even more energy and oil: dropping pollution controls on coal-burning plants, drilling for oil in wildlife refuges and building a new power plant every week (including many nuclear plants) along with 18,000 miles of new gas pipelines.

Citizens and lawmakers need to talk about our choices, since the decisions we make today about our environment will affect decades to come.

There are plenty of questions we need to answer together:

- Should citizens have a right to know about toxic waste in their neighborhoods and pesticide use near our schools?
- Should we give citizens and businesses incentives to save energy?
- Should the government take a citizen's home and property to build pipelines?
- How can we make pipelines safer after the Bellingham pipeline blast that killed three boys and the recent pipeline spill in Renton? What's the best way to prevent oil tankers in Puget Sound from having an accident similar to the Exxon Valdez catastrophe in Alaska?

What do you think? There's nothing more important to me than hearing directly from the citizens I represent.

I look forward to listening to your thoughts and comments.

Sincerely,


Rep. Laura Ruderman
45th Legislative District

Committees:
• Technology, Telecommunications
and Energy (vice chair)
• Health Care
• Appropriations

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2001 Environment & Energy Report



The energy crisis

Attacking the energy crisis from only one direction – supply – won't work. We need a balance of (a) new sources of power and (b) creative ways of using less.

It takes three years to build a new gas power plant. And it's a myth that draconian environmental rules prevent new plants from being built. Right now, six gas-fired power plants have a green light for construction in Everett, Satsop, Longview, Creston, Chehalis and Frederickson. Five more plants are in the works.

So what can we do right now to help solve the energy crunch?

Energy independence

First, let's make sure we're never again dependent on a single source of energy. We should encourage more clean, affordable power from a variety of sources. The West Coast energy crunch turned into a crisis because only a handful of corporations control the supply of power in the West.

Encouraging alternative energy helps give us a solid, diversified foundation while cutting down on pollution. The Legislature passed, and Gov. Gary Locke recently signed, legislation to give consumers the choice of choosing clean power.

With conventional energy prices so high, wind and solar power are cheap. Wind power is now competitive with gas-fired generation and coal. They're constructing the world's largest windmill farm in Eastern Washington right now. According to the Worldwatch Institute, our Great Plains have enough wind potential to power the entire country if we put up wind farms next to corn fields. Worldwide, wind generation is growing at about the same rate as cell phone use.



Clean water

This session, the Legislature found a way to end a decade-long battle about water in our state by passing House Bill 1832.

We still face challenges to having abundant supplies of clean water. Our state is growing fast, and growth means problems with our water supply. Whenever it rains, toxins and pesticides are washed from roads, parking lots, and toxic waste sites into aquifers and our water supply. Population growth also means more septic tanks and wastewater that must be treated properly.

How can we keep our lakes, rivers and drinking supply free from pesticides and toxins?



Your right to know

The first step is making sure you know where the problems lie, since these poisons can cause health problems and cancer, especially in children.

This session, I supported two key pieces of legislation giving you the right to know about:

- Toxic waste sites in your neighborhood (House Bill 1411).
- Pesticide use near local schools (House Bill 1451 and Senate Bill 5533).

Preventing an Exxon Valdez disaster here

I also support efforts to prevent oil tanker spills like the Exxon Valdez in Alaska. Countless oil tankers steam into Puget Sound, and we've been lucky there hasn't been a big accident. But we shouldn't count on luck.

That's why the state needs to require a rescue tug stand at the ready whenever a tanker gets in trouble.



Pipelines

Gas pipelines criss-cross our state, running underneath parks and near our schools and homes. You may not even notice them.

But they can be dangerous. Since 1986, there have been 5,700 pipeline accidents which:

- Killed 325 people;
- Injuring 1,500 people; and
- Released 6 million gallons of hazardous liquids into our environment.

Here in the 45th district, we have two major pipelines running through our neighborhoods. One is the same pipeline that exploded into a fireball in a Bellingham park two years ago, killing two 10-year-old boys (Wade King and Stephen Tsiorvas) and an 18-year-old named Liam Wood.

And this May, the same pipeline ruptured in Renton during a pressure test.

Last session, I voted for reforms to make pipelines safer. This session, I supported more reforms, including legislation to have pipeline companies — instead of taxpayers — pick up the tab for safety inspectors. (House Bill 1452 and Senate Bill 5182)

But more work is ahead. Vice President Cheney proposes 18,000 miles of new gas and oil pipelines. His task force also is talking about the federal government seizing private property to make room for the new pipelines.

I'm not impressed with the safety record of pipelines. We must keep working to make the pipelines we already have safer. Then to think carefully about whether we should embark on a campaign to build thousands of miles of new pipelines.

Cancer treatment

This session, I'm happy to report that we won a victory against cancer on another front.

The state pays to screen low-income, uninsured women for breast or cervical cancer, but until now, women unfortunate enough to learn they had cancer through this program got another hit of bad news: they would have to figure out how to get treatment on their own. I sponsored legislation (House Bill 1058) to provide treatment to these women diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer.

In an era of budget cuts where the rhetoric of "doing more with less" clashes all too often with the reality of "doing less with less," I'm happy to say that this is one instance where the state actually does more with less.

The new law leverages a generous donation of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and a federal match to stretch every dime. We're getting a dollar worth of cancer treatment for about 22 cents of state taxpayer money.

I hope we can build on this success next session to tackle similar holes in our health care system, such as the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs.